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EDITORIALS

The CIA and the Presidency

In its frantic efforts to overhaul intelligence operations in the wake of the ill-starred Cuban invasion, the Kennedy administration has created an "inner" intelligence unit, or command post.

The precise functions of this command post and the hopes entertained for it have not been made clear. All we can gather from reading about it is that it will operate under the State Department—but will include representatives of the Defense Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and possibly the United States Information Agency—and will sift intelligence data on a 24-hour-a-day basis to make sure the President's orders are being carried out.

Maybe this makes sense. We don't know. In any case, it probably looks good on the revised organizational charts of the executive bureaucracy. To the chart viewer, it makes it look as though Something Is Being Done.

We do not say this altogether sarcastically. Intelligence—in-depth—is a murky half-world operation at best. There are bound to be slip-ups, and a system of doublechecks is one way of lessening the goofs.

But the CIA fumble in the Cuban operation appears to have involved some rather fantastic exercises in independent action by the agency. Did the President know CIA representatives had assured Cuban invaders of their success? Did he

know—as Dr. Rodolfo Nodal Tarafa has charged—that Tarafa and 16 other anti-Castro volunteers were held incommunicado for 11 weeks by the CIA under brutal conditions on an island off the Guatemalan coast? (We do not say this charge is true. We are just asking whether the President knew about it if it is true—and if he knew about other serious charges and countercharges involving CIA operations.)

On the face of it, it appears that ~~President~~ Kennedy, like Presidents Eisenhower and Truman before him, was not fully aware of what the massive CIA was doing.

This is an extremely dangerous situation. If the creation of a miniaturized inner intelligence agency on top of the CIA will serve to rectify it, well and good—even though the move does have the outward aspect of another futile bit of chart-juggling.

Furthermore we know that in police work "those who work with dogs catch fleas." All CIA agents and their operations cannot be expected to be lily-white.

But our opinion, and a growing body of opinion elsewhere, is that the CIA simply has got too big for its britches. It should be confined to intelligence work and separated from command of paramilitary operations, for one thing. And, above all, it should be made closely responsible to the President for its every action.